

First records of Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* for Ghana

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Premières observations de la Pie-grièche écorcheur *Lanius collurio* au Ghana. Une Pie-grièche écorcheur *Lanius collurio* mâle a été photographiée près de Dzita, près de la côte du sud-est du Ghana, le 6 avril 2011, et un individu en plumage de premier hiver à Shai Hills le 4 décembre suivant. Il s'agit des premières données au Ghana d'un migrateur paléarctique très rarement rencontré en Afrique occidentale.

On 6 April 2011, at 16.30 hrs, a shrike was spotted by MH & AS on a roadside wire west of the coastal village of Dzita in Volta Region, Ghana (05°46'N 00°45'E). This is c.14.5 km east of Ada Foah, and south-west of the border with Togo. Initially seen 0.5 km north of the beach and 200 m from a small lagoon, it flew further inland to a small bush in a sandy area with irrigated crops. It was watched at close range for c.40 minutes. Photographs were taken using a 300-mm zoom lens (Fig. 1).

Distinctive features included the blue-grey crown extending to the nape, rufous-chestnut mantle and wings with pale fringes to the wing feathers, a grey rump, and whitish-buff underparts (in the shade) which appeared more fulvous in direct sunlight. The black tail had white over the basal half of the outer feathers. The bird was clearly an adult male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, the first record for Ghana (Borrow & Demey 2010).

On 4 December 2011 AR photographed a bird in the Shai Hills Resource Reserve, north of

Accra (05°56'N 00°04'E) (Fig. 2). The possibility of the bird being a member of the Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* complex can be eliminated due to the heavily barred flanks, warm brown mantle and long primary projection (*cf.* Worfolk 2000), and its identity was subsequently confirmed as a first-year Red-backed Shrike of uncertain sex (D. J. Pearson *in litt.* 2011).

Red-backed Shrike breeds over much of Eurasia and winters mainly in southern and eastern Africa (Cramp & Perrins 1993). The species tends to conduct a loop migration, with northward passage in spring following a more easterly course than southbound passage in autumn (Cramp & Perrins 1993). South of the Sahara and west of Nigeria and Niger, there are previous records only from Mauritania (one authenticated record, 22 October: Isenmann *et al.* 2010) and Côte d'Ivoire (an immature male, present on the coast November–March: Demey & Fishpool 1991). A report from Mali (Lamarque 1981) is considered unconfirmed whilst a record from The Gambia (Ericsson 1989) is not supported by a description



Figure 1. Adult male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, near Dzita, coastal Ghana, 6 April 2011 (Mark Hulme)

Pie-grièche écorcheur *Lanius collurio* mâle adulte, près de Dzita, côte du sud-est du Ghana, 6 avril 2011 (Mark Hulme)



Figure 2. First-year Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Shai Hills, Ghana, 4 December 2011 (Adam Riley)

Pie-grièche écorcheur *Lanius collurio* de 1re année, Shai Hills, Ghana, 4 décembre 2011 (Adam Riley)

and has not been accepted by subsequent authors (e.g., Barlow *et al.* 1997, Atkinson *et al.* 2007–11, Borrow & Demey 2011). It is striking that the intensive migration research by an international team over several years in Senegal produced no records of Red-backed Shrike (Rodwell *et al.* 1996).

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